

# Blood Debt

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Summary: "Men who kill without reason, cannot be reasoned with" The war is over, the battle is won and Drago Bludvist has been driven from Berk . But at a price Hiccup never wanted to pay. Arriving alone on Outcast Island Hiccup starts a lone crusade to find Drago, and repay his Blood debt. HTTYD 2 Spoilers. AU - ending of HTTYD 2 slightly different.

## 1. Chapter 1

Alvin the treacherous was not an easily surprised man. When Stoick the Vast had banished him from Berk, he had known it would have happened sooner or later. When his Whispering Death had birthed a monstrosity, a Screaming Death, he had consoled himself by saying nobody would have expected that. When he had made peace with Berk after almost decades of war, he had been mildly surprised.

What he saw today surprised him.

Hiiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third stood in front of him. Alone. Alvin hadn't seen the boy in months, not since Stoick had invited him to watch the Dragon Races. Hiccup hadn't changed much since then, he still wore a black leather armor, with assorted gadgets attached. His mask no longer had glass lenses but didn't seem relevant. Something seemed off. Hiccup had arrived on Outcast island on the back of a Timberjack, which flew away the moment he landed. His Nightfury was nowhere in sight.

"Where is he?" Hiccup asked.

"Who?, "

"You know who I mean!" Hiccup shouted.

Alvin glanced behind Hiccup to make sure he hadn't made a mistake. Toothless definitely didn't come with him. Does he think I have something to do with that?

"If you mean Toothless-" He started, but something shifted in Hiccup's eyes when he said that, in the next instant a flaming sword stood in Hiccup's hand and pointed at Alvin's throat. The outcasts nearby drew their swords but didn't move any closer.

"Not him,"

Alvin gestured with his hand "Put 'em away boys, I'm sure this is just a misunderstanding," He turned back to Hiccup, who seemed to be selecting his words very carefully.

"The Screaming Death it's here isn't it?" Hiccup didn't move his sword. Alvin nodded. Hiccup lowered his blade but kept it flaming. "Take me to him,"

Alvin rubbed his throat but didn't complain. He started walking towards the arena, he motioned for one of the guards to make preparations. Much had changed in the four years The Outcasts had become Berk's allies. The Island was still rocky and impossible to farm, but jagged rocks and underwater caverns were oases for fish. Fishing was easier now that dragons did not hamper every movement or burn down every storage shed.

Whereas before the wild dragons had burnt and terrorized the island. With the help of Hiccup years prior, they now tolerated it. A small number of the population, largely children, had even tamed a few.

Alvin examined Hiccup out of the corner of his eye. He didn't seem that different. Granted he stood straighter then he did five years ago, maybe a bit taller, but that was old news. No something was different, but his mask made it difficult to tell what.

As they pass through the tunnel leading to the arena, Alvin asked, "Is something the matter boy?" Hiccup didn't answer, but Alvin could see his eyes dart towards him through his mask. "Did something happen to Toothless?"

Hiccup turned and slammed into Alvin. He shoved him against a wall and once again placed his sword at his neck. "Don't say his name,"

Alvin hesitated before palming the dagger he had touching Hiccup's chest and holding his arms up in surrender. Hiccup stepped back and walked away, the arena in sight now.

\_The boy isn't meant to be that strong.\_ \_Something has changed in him.\_ He thought. He waited and watched as Hiccup walked towards the ledge of the Arena.

The arena was a shadow of what it had once been. A grand shadow but a shadow nonetheless. Five years ago the floor had collapsed when Dagur the Deranged was taken down by one of Hiccup's plans. Since then, the outcasts rarely ventured down the hundred foot pit. Even during the day light never reached the floor, and for some reason dragons avoided it like eels, most of the them anyway.

The first time Alvin had descended he was almost surprised. At the bottom of the pit were dozens of huge holes in the walls and ground,

and within moments he had been surrounded by Whispering Deaths. Most of them had left years before, but apparently a few mavericks had split from the others and remained, building a nest. Alvin survived the encounter, the Death's were more curious than angry.

Then \_it \_had come.

When the Screaming Death returned Alvin had been surprised. He saw it arrive through the tunnels and ignore the Outcasts completely. Alvin descended later and found it resting with its flight, it had regarded him with one huge red eye before going back to sleep. He returned the next day with a cart of fish. After eating it returned to its rest. This ritual happened for a week every year, before it flew away with the rest of its flight. Alvin wasn't entirely sure why he fed it, probably the influence of the boy standing before him. The other Outcasts were to afraid to even descend.

Alvin watched Hiccup down into the darkness and pause. He drew his Gronckle iron dagger and tested against the floor. It cut two inches into the stone before stopping. Apparently pleased, he ignored the rope offered to him and checked the straps on his armor.

Alvin turned to Mildew, who had appeared from nowhere, "Send a Terror to Stoick, tell him something's wrong with his boy,"

"Anything specifically?" Mildew mumbled. He batted away a Smokebreath that crawled up to Fungus' leg.

Alvin stroked his beard, "Hmm, No. I'm willing to bet he knows better than I about this."

Mildew nodded and rattled his staff above his head, eliciting a small chorus of flapping wings as Terrible Terrors descended around him while he walked away. All of them outside of swatting distance.

Hiccup was now hanging from the edge of the abyss, gazing into the darkness. Alvin stepped over and watched him, "Need a hand?"

Hiccup turned to him, "No,"

He let go of the edge.

\* \* \*

><p>"<em>Great White-one, a presence approaches."<em>

The White-one awoke. But kept its eyes shut. Content to ignore. Nothing was a threat to it. Anything that could not threaten it was a not threat to its soft-spoken brothers.

"\_It is not a Skyling" S\_poke one.

"\_It is not the exiled Alpha." \_Spoke another.

This piqued its interest. Many humans it had seen in it's time, rarely would they approach knowing he was near. Only The Vast, the Exiled Alpha, and the Child of Sky and Fire had approached without fear.

Its brothers woke up one by one, each speaking words heard only by skylings and themselves, steadily rising into a silent cacophony that disturbed its rest.

"\_It does not bring food,"\_

"\_Nor other skylings,"\_

"\_It's smell is not of life,"\_

"\_Impudence!"\_

"\_Should we scare it?"\_

"\_Should we bite it?"\_

"\_Should we kill it?"\_

Silence descended upon the last question. The White-one didn't answer, it was not its place to rule its brother's actions. It extended its senses in the direction its brothers had and hesitated, the presence was both familiar and alien. Not quite skyling and not quite human.

The sound of metal scraping against stone reached its ears followed by the tapping of human foot and more metal. The White-one turned his head and opened its eyes, watching the intruder. It wore black cattle skin and green sheep fur. In its hands were a tooth of metal and a claw of metal. Its left leg was of human make.

The intruder's hand moved and the claw was set alight with flame, illuminating 20 feet around. Immediately the brothers lifted their wings and started the whispers. Whispers that even the small ears of humans could hear and understand. The intruder paused before dropping the claw and the tooth. But the whispers did not stop.

It started to walk towards the White-one, unfazed by the darkness beyond the light of its claw, or the whispers that continued to harass him.

"\_Arrogance,"\_

"\_Deception"\_

"\_Child of dirt,"\_

As it approached, it removed pieces of its cattle skin and sheep fur, one at a time its eyes never shifting from the White-one's own.

"\_Failure,"\_

"\_Outcast,"\_

"\_Slaver,"\_

"\_Frightened  
whelp"\_

"\_Friendless,"\_

"\_Cripple"\_

"\_Alone,"\_

"\_Brother of Dirt,"\_

At the last one it removed its helmet and turned to the brother which had said that. The White-one snapped awake as it felt the presence of an Alpha descend. In the darkness the intruder's eyes narrowed and slanted, an impossibility among the humans.

The brother shrank back as if struck by the skyfather. It's whispers became whimpers as it tried to escape the overwhelming presence placed upon it.

The White-one watched impassively, having recognized the intruder. It watched as its brother struggled mentally, spikes flying wildly, and its shrieks of fear before finally succumbing and falling to floor, bowing before the intruder.

"\_\*\*So the Child of Sky and Fire returns,\*\*" \_It chuckled and rose from the ground. It looked at its contrite brother and reasserted control before turning to the one known as Hiccup among its kind.

He stood naked but for a cloth wrapped around his waste. "\_I have come for you \_\_Screaming Death\_\_, "\_

The brothers shifted back, it was unheard of for a human to know The Speech.

Again there was a rumbling noise that made the air vibrate as the White-one chuckled, louder this time "\_\*\*Very good Child, you have surprised me again. \*\*\_\_\*\*You may call me\*\*\_\_\*\* Nidhogg.\*\*\_\_" \_Nidhogg looked up before continuing, "\_\*\*W\*\*\_\_\*\*here is your Brother of Night that I may congratulate his bond to such a human\*\*\_\_?"\_

Hiccup snarled and his eyes narrowed again. A wave of pressure hit the Nidhogg. The Nidhogg was not its brothers though, and it flicked the pressure aside as a child would an insect. Hiccup reacted as if he had been slapped and put a hand to the side of his face but turned back just as angry as before.

"\_\*\*Y\*\*\_\_\*\*ou would be wise to not try that again, my patience grows thin\*\*\_.\_"

"\_I need your help,"\_

"\_\*\*No,\*\*\_"

"\_That was not a choice,"\_

"\_\*\*And who are you to make me? Child,\*\*\_\_"\_

"\_I am Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, Chief of Berk, The First Dragon Rider, Child of Sky and Fire and Alpha to the Dragons of Berk,"\_

He paused. Then looked at him again. His eyes narrowed into slits

and his presence became ancient and old, Dark and of Lightning. That of a dragon.

"\_You will do as I say or I will bring a thousand dragons to you and brothers and root you\_\_r kin\_\_ from this land. I will bring a thousand vikings to chain you deep beneath the earth until the horns of Ragnarok call. And when you die, I shall scatter your ashes to the wind so that none know of your passing,"\_

"\_\*\*IMPUDENT WHELP!" \*\*\_The Nidhogg screamed, a terrible scream that made the air rip and the sky tear and the walls crack. Its brothers cowered and hid in their tunnels and the earth shook as if Thor himself had struck the ground. "\_\*\*I am the descendant of the Jǫrmungandr, The World Serpent\*\*\_\_\*\*t\*\*\_\_\*\*, and have the blood of gods. I will be young when your children's children have become dust. I will see you rise again among the dead at the call of Ragnarok \*\*\_\_\*\*before I grow old\*\*\_\_\*\*. Do not presume to your presence is anything but a spark in my existence."\*\*\_

The Nidhogg lifted itself higher before shooting towards Hiccup, A meteor of destruction.

Hiccup was not afraid. Hiccup did not move. He did not flinch when the hundreds of teeth and the black maw covered him in shadows darker than the pit. Nor when he felt the first of its fangs puncture his arms and neck. He waited.

The Nidhogg stopped. It removed its fangs and tasted the blood and considered. Then it laughed. Great bellowing laughs. Unlike before though the air did not shimmer or break nor was a sound made. For the laugh was of The Speech. When one spoke in The Speech, feelings cannot be hidden.

"\_\*\*Your courage does you credit Child of Sky and Fire. Not even the Exiled Alpha \*\*\_\_\*\*would lie so boldly\*\*\_\_\*\* nor \*\*\_\_\*\*would\*\*\_\_\*\* your sire have stood as firm,\*\*\_"

At the mention of his sire, Hiccup flinched and clenched and unclenched his fist. The Nidhogg noticed this but did not speak of it.

"\_\*\*But I will never bow to Man, Child or Skyling,\*\*\_"

"You won't bow. We will be equals, brothers until our task is complete,"

The Nidhogg considered this for a moment then did its best approximation of a nod.

"\_\*\*What is our endeavor brother?"\*\*\_

Hiccup's eyes narrowed. "Revenge."

\* \* \*

><p><em>Four hours later<em>

Astrid flew towards Outcast Island. Hiccup had been missing the entire day. Fishlegs, Snotlout and the Twins had gone to the other islands and tribes to search, while Astrid went to Alvin. As she flew

she saw the debris of hundreds of ships. Blood was in the water and the sharks were in a frenzy.

There had been a battle here.

She recognized the first emblem immediately, the Skrill, emblem of the Berserkers. As she looked for the emblem of the outcasts she didn't find it. Finally she gave up and continued to Outcast island.

She flew above the island and dropped herself off at the Arena, where Alvin stood, directing his men. The Cage over the arena had been shattered from within but that was not what caught her attention. Hundreds of Berserkers lay around on the floor. Outcasts, dragons and Mildew darted between them. Most seemed tired or half drowned, but a few had black spikes in their skin, more drill-like than a Nadders. One man had a white spike so large it impaled his entire arm.

When Alvin spotted her he gestured to a few guards to return to the wounded prisoners then walked over, "Astrid? Why isn't Stoick here? I sent him a message hours ago." He raised his hand to help her down. She got down, ignoring her surprise and asked.

"Did the Berserkers attack? What happened?"

"Hiccup that's what!" Alvin spoke with a sneer, "I sent for Stoick where is he?"

Astrid's face fell as she said this but before she could say something Mildew returned.

"Alvin, the Terror just returned with your message still attached. I don't understand it. I've seen them fly straight through a tornado and get the message delivered."

Alvin's eyes widened, he turned back to Astrid and realized what had happened.

"No..." Alvin roared and grabbed Astrid by her throat and lifted her into the air, "Tell me who was it that did it?"

The instant he touched her, Stormfly screeched and whipped her tail at him. Mildew was faster still. Realizing a moment before what was about to occur, he rattled his staff and pointed at the Nadder. Before it could let loose its spikes, a dozen Terrors jumped it and knocked it over. But they wouldn't distract her for long.

Alvin ignored the scuffle and pressed Astrid's neck harder, "Who. Did. IT!" He shouted. His face had contorted with anger, the veins in his arm extended like like malformed roots.

Astrid panicked she kicked his shoulder but it didn't budge. Alvin the Treacherous was one of two Vikings who could truthfully claim they could overpower a dragon, the kicks of Shieldmaiden were little compared to Dragons.

Astrid forced herself to calm down as she felt her vision start to cloud. She retaliated again but instead of attacking she brought her legs up and coiled them around his arm and swung herself towards his back. She smiled briefly as she heard his shoulder dislocate, but

gasped in pain as she hit the ground, and the wind was forced out of her lungs.

By this time Stormfly had rid herself of the Terrors and picked her up, "Wait girl," Stormfly crooned in anger, worried about her rider but stopped ten feet away from where Alvin was now on one knee. She dropped to her knees for a moment and leaned on Stormfly's leg as she caught her breath, chasing away the dark corners of her vision.

"What the Hel was that?"

Alvin said nothing.

"You attacked me!"

He remained silent.

Astrid reached for her axe, and pointed it at him. "Do you want wa-"

"Who did it." Alvin looked up from the floor. He was no longer angry. At least his face did not show it. Astrid thought she could see something else in his eyes but it fell behind a wall of dark steel.

Astrid paused before answering, "Drago Bludvist," She omitted the details.

Alvin stood up and looked at his arm. He motioned for Mildew to examine him. Mildew looked for a moment before grabbing his arm and twisting it sharply, there was an audible click. Alvin shifted his shoulder and didn't complain.

'\_That would have hurt' \_Astrid thought.

"Is he dead?\_"\_

"No." She sighed and looked away but kept her axe on him, "No he's not dead,"

A flash of anger threatened to engulf him again, his eyes once again burned with intense anger and hatred. But it disappeared as quickly as it came. "Come we have much to talk about," He started to walk away but Astrid didn't move.

"You think that aft-"

"Astrid Hofferson, Shieldmaiden of Berk, I apologize for my conduct and I swear by Thor will strive to make amends for my rash action," He didn't turn around, but neither did he voice his statement in his usual sneering tone.

Astrid stood shocked for a moment. In the five years their tribes had been united, Alvin had never apologized for any of his actions, whether regarding his most recent exploits or those that got him banished he had never admitted fault in his actions.

Astrid decided to put the incident behind her, for now. She strapped her Axe to her back and walked towards him a few steps behind,



Stormfly at her side.

Alvin stopped just before they went into a cave and looked over his shoulder. "He wasn't the only one was he?"

Astrid was more prepared for this question. But she shook her head, not wanting to speak, otherwise she might start crying again.

"Toothless is dead."

## 2. Chapter 2

The cave Alvin led her through was the Outcast equivalent of the Great Hall, it had an unpleasant dampness to it that made Astrid's skin crawl and the walls made her feel trapped. Whereas Berk's hall was filled with intricately carved tables and chairs, and was wide and open, everything in this place was entirely made of stone; each chair and each table directly cut from the stone it was made from with barely any space between them. Lanterns and Smokebreaths hung from the dozens of stalactites that threatened to drop at any moment, barely illuminating the small hall they were in and gave the walls an unsettling effect as the dragons shifted and moved.

At the back of the hall Astrid noticed a sleeping Whispering Death. It was next to the entrance of another of the tunnels the entire Island seemed to be criss-crossed with. Its mouth lay open and its jaws rotated almost lazily.

"Don't worry about him, Milk-eyes don't do Nothin' but sleep now a days," Alvin said. He sat down at a table furthest from the way they came, unfortunately that put Astrid's seat a few feet away from the Whispering Death. It turned towards her, its eyes as pale as ice, and started to whisper.

"\_Bride of sky and fire-" \_Before it could continue Stormfly reared up in front of it angrily and screeched. Her tail spikes extended menacingly as she placed herself between them. Milk-eyes shut its mouth stared at her, ignoring Stormfly. Its unseeing eyes blinked a few times before it slithered into one of the tunnels, producing a haunting scraping sound as its spikes scratched the rock floor.

Alvin watched the exchange silently, "Odd that one,"

Astrid moved to calm Stormfly down, smoothing her tail spikes slowly until they flattened and the Nadder roosted contently next to them. She eyed the tunnel entrance suspiciously but was content to lay her head next to Astrid.

They sat in silence. Alvin did not want to hear the story that Astrid did not want to tell. It was eventually Mildew who broke the silence, he wandered in from the tunnel Milk-eyes had exited, Fungus close behind. When he saw the two of them he sighed, "How did the Boy's father die?"

Astrid's eyes flicked towards Mildew. She put a hand on Stormfly's head for support. Stormfly "Drago's Alpha, Hiccup tried to show him a different way, but he took control of Toothless. Valka

couldn't-

Alvin's eyes widened in shock, "Valka? she's alive?"

Astrid nodded.

"Start from the beginning girl, I want to know exactly what happened,"

Astrid paused then took a deep breath and lifted herself up so she sat-up straight in her chair. She told him everything. How she and Hiccup had encountered Drago's trappers, Hiccup had been captured by a Dragon rider, who turned out to be his mother, and taken to her Dragon Sanctuary. She spoke of the Bewildebeasts and the power they displayed over other dragons and the battle at the Dragon Sanctuary.

She spoke of Stoick's sacrifice.

"...he pushed Hiccup out of the way, and took the blast himself." Her voice was distant, "No one could survive that,"

"I would have just killed the dragon," Alvin said absentmindedly.

Astrid's expression changed into a snarl. Her dagger was in her hand in an instant and she slammed down it on the table and between his fingers, missing them by a hair's breath. Alvin didn't react, if the girl had intended to harm him she would have.

"Say that again," She spat.

Astrid could see Alvin choose his next words more carefully.

"He died a good death, a Viking death. Nothing less than what he deserves."

Astrid raised her eyebrow suspiciously and twisted the knife till the metal touched Alvin's skin.

"Gods above girl, We were friends once, don't look at me like that. I mean that with the utmost respect." He motioned for Mildew to get them some drinks, then asked, "What happened then?"

Astrid gritted her teeth and forced herself to calm down. She explained how they returned to Berk being destroyed and Hiccup managed to get through to Toothless, and Hiccup and Toothless drove off Drago. Her expression softened and she looked down, she dis-attached the dagger from the table but kept it in her hand.

"How did Toothless die?"

"When Drago was leaving, he threw his spear and it nicked Toothless. We didn't think much of it until he'd already got away and by that time it was already too late. It had been poisoned."

Stormfly crooned softly, trying to comfort her rider, clearly forlorn herself. Astrid wiped her nose then looked up Alvin. "Tell me what he did,"

"Hiccup?"

Astrid nodded.

Alvin scratched his head, unsure where to begin, "Are you aware that the Screaming Death-"

"Returns to your island once a year for a week at a time? Hiccup and I spotted it once when we were...out"

Alvin nodded, "Hiccup arrived here in his full outfit, on the back of a Timberjack. He said he wanted to see the Screaming Death. Something was wrong the boy, his were wrong, so I asked him about his dragon and he attacked me."

"Alvin if you-"

"Relax girl, he's not hurt, he almost gutted me though. Since when was he so strong?"

Astrid bit her lip, but quickly hid her expression, "What did you do?"

"Ah lead him to the arena where the thing slept and he went down on his own."

Mildew appeared again he handed Alvin a mug of what appeared to be ale and gave Astrid the same. She removed her dagger from the table and pushed the mug away, drumming her fingers impatiently as Alvin eagerly finished his own before considering hers.

"Finish your story, then you drink," She placed a hand on her mug protectively.

"When he had descended there was a sound that made the island shake, I was sure he'd been eaten. You got to understand girl, the beast has grown since you last saw it. If the Red Death's skeleton was anything to go by it was just as large and twice the length. I don't think even your Nightfury could have taken him down."

"You didn't see Toothless yesterday," She said quietly. She remembered watching in awe as Toothless stood alight with plasma, glowing like the moon and firing blasts that rattled her teeth from hundreds of feet away. Hiccup stood beside him, a fierce pride on his face, as they stood defiantly against creature whose mere presence induced subservience.

'\_How many more of these leviathans are there?' \_She took a sip from her mug to calm her nerves, but spit it out again instantly. "It's gone off,"

Mildew scratched his head, "Could have sworn ah got those two from tha same batch,"

Alvin took it from her and took a drink, "Taste's fine to me"

"You have it then," She cleared her head and asked, "What happened next?"

"Then Dagur attacked me."

"Dagur? Why?"

Alvin, "No idea. There's a reason he's called Dagur the Deranged and not Dagur the mild and reasonable,"

"Yes, and you're Alvin the Treacherous. But we've been with you for years. "

Alvin shrugged, "I just learned to pick my enemies better."

"\_Right\_,"

"Anyway, I shouted down the pit, just to be sure he was gone. But what do you know, he was still alive!" Alvin slammed the table as though he found his story hilarious in some way. "Next thing I know, he's riding the damn thing outta the pit and into the sky. Not only him, but damn near every dragon on the island got up. As if they were under some spell."

Astrid sucked air in through her teeth, "It's an Alpha,"

"That's what ah was thinking,"

"Sounds like it, It must have been too young before."

Alvin took a long draught from Astrid's mug and finished it. "You're not going to like the next part girl, sure you still wanna know?"

"Tell me,"

"He killed Dagur,"

Astrid's eye grew wide and her heart started to race. "He did what?"

"When I told him Dagur was attacking he pointed his sword, the flaming one, and sent the dragons after the fleet."

"But there weren't any Dragon's bodies at the wreckage,"

"You made the same mistake Dagur did, he saw the one's in the sky and thought that those were the only ones. Hiccup took control of all the Dragons, that includes the ones underwater as well. Thunderdrums, Scauldron's and Sharkwurms tore apart his fleet while Dagur and his men were all but helpless to watch. When Dagur's was the last ship there, Hiccup jumped aboard, grabbed him and gutted him above the ruins of his fleet." Alvin seemed to smile at this. Astrid held her face in her hands and tried to calm herself, she couldn't afford to lose it now, not again.

"What's the matter girl, you make it seem like he's never killed a person before,"

"He hasn't."

Alvin scratched his beard, "Well it's still nothin' to worry about. He only killed Dagur is all,"

Astrid didn't remove her hands from her face, "What about the Berserker's at sea?"

"What?" Alvin said confused.

"You seem to be taking care of a lot of Berserkers -"

"As a favour to Berk of course, Stoick and his boy seem to get annoyed when I leave people to die,"

Astrid continued without stopping, "But is that all of them out there?"

"Well, I din't see the point of risking my boys out in the oc-"

"Exactly. And when Hiccup killed Dagur, was he a threat to anyone?"

"Not really," He scratched his, confused at the line of questions.

Astrid slammed her fist into the table, "Dammit,"

Hiccup had been many things, but he had never been a cold-blooded killer. Astrid got up from her seat and walked towards the exit. Stormfly close behind. "I need to find him. Before he get's himself killed, or worse," She needed to get back to Berk, tell Gobber, and Valka what had happened maybe they could do something.

"I don't see why you're worried. He's a Viking, we kill people \_and\_ \_h\_e's riding on the back of a bloody Screaming Death."

She stopped by the door, "That's \_why\_ I'm worried. Hiccup's not a Viking, not like me, and definitely not like you. There should only be one dragon he's riding on,"

\* \* \*

><p>"<em>How is it you're going to find them?<em>"

Hiccup gripped the headspike of Nidhogg as tight as he could. Until he could get a saddle (a seemingly impossible task for a dragon this size) he had to make do by holding onto a head spike and pray to Thor that there weren't any storms.

"\_\*\*You say that he departed \*\*\_\_\*\*into the ocean\*\*\_\_\*\* while still riding the Sea King,\*\*"\_

"\_Yes," \_He gritted his as a freezing gale bit at his fingers.

"\_\*\*Take me to where he left, \*\*\*\*it is where \*\*\*\*I\*\*\*\* will start, \*\*\*\*you will have to wait behind\*\*\*\*,\*\*"\_

Hiccup sighed. If he returned to Berk they would ask too many questions, or try and stop him. He knew Astrid would, and his mother. And there were other reasons he didn't want to return for a while.

"\_\*\*What troubles you?"\*\*\_

"\_Waiting\_\_ could be...difficult," \_He put his arms around a spike and rubbed his hands together and watched the sun as it started to dip into the horizon. "How long will you be?"

"\_\*\*As long as needs be,"\*\*\_

"\_That was wonderfully cryptic, does that take practice?"\_

Nidhogg hissed and Hiccup felt more hot air rise up to meet him, along with some smoke, \_\*\*"I am not some Skyling that you can mock and deride, child,"\*\*\_

Hiccup shifted himself down and wrapped his legs around the headspike, "\_Yeah well I 'mock and deride' everyone,"\_

\* \* \*

><p>They landed on the North side of the Island, a short walk from the village just as the sun set. Most of the Vikings would be asleep now, Hiccup was usually the only person awake at this time of night. He cringed slightly. '<em>No, not the only one.'<em>

"\_\*\*I can smell the presence of the Sea King, faintly"\*\*\_

"\_Then you can find him on your own?"\_

"\_\*\*Yes," \*\*\_Nidhogg started to slither away, when a question came to Hiccup.

"\_How will you be able to tell his smell from..."\_

"\*\*\_I remember the Child of Night's smell," \_\*\*Nidhogg replied without looking back, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

Hiccup watched as it left then looked around. He recognized where he was now, but everything looked strange. The moonlight seemed to be brighter and the outlines of the trees and rocks were as clear as day. He could hear a nest of fireworms sleeping underneath a tree, 15 ft away. There was a roost of Terrors wandering about the night, looking for a quick meal and a Monstrous Nightmare, not Hookfang, flew overhead towards the beach where it would feed.

Hiccup stood still for while, overwhelmed by the information he was getting. As he walked he became aware of more and more Dragons. '\_Woah, this is weird,'\_

He stopped paying attention to where he was going, allowing his feet and instincts to guide him, as the entire island suddenly became alive and different from what he knew it to be, it was for this reason that he didn't notice where his feet were taking him. Straight to the cove.

It was deserted, not a dragon in sight or earshot, finally giving him some peace. The water cascaded down the waterfall as it always did and the light of the full moon reflected off the water's surface and dazzled Hiccup. He felt his chest tighten as memories of his first

encounter came back to him unbidden. He forced them back down, he couldn't afford to think about them right now. Right now he needed to be strong, and to wait. "Come on what's taking so long?" he muttered. He paced around the edge of the lake.

"Are you waiting for the Screaming Death?"

Hiccup stiffened and spun around, "What the- What are you doing here?"

Astrid sat against a rock, it was the same as when she had first confronted Hiccup about his sudden mastery of dragon fighting five years ago. Unlike before though, she seemed more subdued, and less angry. Her axe rested against her shoulder and she had replaced her summer cloak for her longer winter one. It draped over her arms and parts of her legs. A small bag lay closed and sat between the base of her spine and the rock.

"Waiting for you,"

Hiccup looked around, He could feel the roost of Terrors had moved to the only way in and out of the cove, making it impossible for him to leave quickly with out stirring up half the forest.

Astrid noticed his eyes darting about immediately and jumped to her feet. "Hiccup wait, I didn't bring Stormfly with me."

Hiccup knew that already, nonetheless he looked for a way out. He knew Astrid would try and stop him, so his only option was to leave before she tried. He tried to go back the way he came, damn the Terrors, but Astrid stood in his way.

She put her hands on his shoulders, "You killed Dagur," She tried to say it as neutrally as possible, but Hiccup could hear the worry in her voice now. He didn't bother asking where she found out, he could smell Outcast on her now, Alvin.

"Yes, I did. And don't you dare tell me I shouldn't have,"

"I wasn't going to. Dagur should have died a long time ago. Anyone else would have done it." she paused, "But not you."

Hiccup laughed scornfully, "Why not me? He's tried to kill me and my family plenty of times,"

"But you've always been different,"

"Yeah, and where has that gotten me? My father is dead, my brother is dead, and their murderer walks free. I am done being that guy."

"So you're going to kill Drago," She tried not to sound accusing, but it did all the same.

Hiccup's eyes narrowed, "Yes, I am," He seemed to spit the words out like they left a vile taste in his mouth. He pushed past Astrid before she could gather herself. He didn't bother looking behind him, it was obvious she was going to try and stop him. She would tell him that what he was doing was crazy and not right. She might even fight him. If he got to the entrance maybe he could convince the Terrors to stall her but until th-.

"I'm coming with you,"

Hiccup stopped in his tracks. She hadn't said it as a request, or looking for any approval, she said it as if it were already fact. "Why?"

Astrid paused, "Drago's a monster Hiccup. He deserves to die. I can't let you fight him alone and you've already made your choice, I know I can't change your mind and I'm not going to stop you from going," Hiccup stopped himself from saying 'you would try,' and kept listening.

"If you're going after him, you should have someone with you. To watch your back. " She seemed to have thought a lot about her reasons.

He didn't need to think about his answer though, "No,"

"Why?" She retorted.

"Because you'll try and stop me,"

"I just told you I won't! Hiccup you know me."

Hiccup switched tactics. "You'll just slow me down,"

"You're riding on a Screaming Death, nothing is going to slow you down,"

"You could be hurt," These words were the hardest to say. They had the most truth to them. "I could lose you,"

"Hiccup!" She seemed angry now, "It's not your job to protect me, my choices are my own. If you are going to kill Drago. Then I'm coming with you, even if I you don't want me there."

"Astrid this isn't like before. Drago isn't like Dagur or Alvin, he has dragons and I can't protect you-"

"Hiccup. Look at me."

Hiccup turned around, she stood locking eyes with a gaze even a Monstrous Nightmare would have been hard-pressed to match. Her sun-kissed hair took on a strange quality in the moonlight, just as they did five years ago, and Hiccup found himself just as lost in her grey-blue as he had been then.

"I am not some village girl who weaves and knits, I'm not just some shieldmaiden who knows only fighting, I'm a dragon rider."

"I know it-" His eyes wandered to her neck and became slanted. "How did you get injured?" Red lines had formed across her neck like knotted roots, and seemed to bulge painfully. He cursed inwardly to himself for not noticing sooner.

"Doesn't matter," She adjusted her cloak so that it covered her neck better.

"Of course it matters! How can I let you come with me if you're



hurt?" Hiccup moved towards her and tried to take a closer look.

"Hiccup, Vikings get hurt, it's an occupational hazard," She said almost mechanically, \_'\_\_\_an occupational hazard'\_ was Berk's unofficial motto at this point. "and I don't think I'm the one whose hurt,"

She pressed her hand against his chest, feeling his racing heart through the hardened leather. He stopped adjusting her cloak examining her neck and looked at her again. She was looking at his chest though. "You're in pain, and you're angry. You're angry at the world, at the gods for letting this happen and at \_him."\_

He felt her hand press against his armor him gently, and he felt his heart slow. "And you're angry at yourself," she said almost a silently.

He pushed her away, his chest felt like it was being crushed, and his breathing felt laboured. Astrid started to say something, to apologize, when Hiccup spoke, "You can come," He felt his heart start to beat faster again, but each beat felt like it was pumping tree sap, "But, you follow my lead, no questions and don't talk about what happened," Hiccup didn't need to explain what was. Astrid tried to interrupt but he spoke up, "Not until afterwards. I can't think about it. Now now." He said the words very carefully, measuring each of his words.

"Hiccup..."

"Swear it Astrid. Swear it on Stormfly's life,"

She bit her lip for a moment before speaking, "I swear on my axe that I will abide by the rules you just stated,"

Hiccup accepted her oath and sighed with relief, then again when Astrid hugged him.

The sound of tree branches breaking and stones cracking alerted him to something obvious he had missed approaching them.

"\_\*\*I hope that this is not what I think it is,\*\*\_" Nidhogg entered the cove from one of the cliffs and looked at Astrid and Hiccup with disdain. its entire body stood out against the black night like a candle in the dark, its red-eyes even more so.

Astrid almost jumped back and stared looked at the huge dragon, her eyes flicked back to Hiccup nervously. Her hand had slipped down behind her back where she could quickly reach her axe. He put his arm on her shoulder reassuringly and she relaxed, slightly, returning her hand to her side.

"\_\*\*I think this one is nervous,\*\*\_" Nidhogg sounded amused.

"Did you find them?" Nidhogg blinked, slightly confused as to why Hiccup spoke Norse.

"\_\*\*They headed towards the morning, they are half-a-sun's journey away,\*\*\_"

When Hiccup told Astrid she blinked a few times, "You can speak to dragons?" She sounded only mildly surprised.

"Only since yesterday,"

"Oh," Then Astrid pursed her lips, "The only island in that direction is the Berserker's,"

"I know,"

"But that means that-"

"Dagur probably met Drago before he died." Hiccup kicked a rock across the lake, Astrid saw it skip over the water straight to the other side, "DAMMIT!" Hiccup shouted. Their biggest lead was gone.

"\_\*\*Quiet yourself, your intention was not to draw attention. This tantrum does not suit that purpose, yes?" \*\*\_Its tone that of a parent scolding a child.

Hiccup glowered at Nidhogg but restrained himself, he could feel its presence like a thick fog, not suffocating or overpowering, or even as a threat. Just a statement about the huge difference between them.

"Let go then, he can follow them there can't he?" Astrid was already climbing onto Nidhogg's back, using the multitude of spikes as climbing holds. Her axe and her small pack hung on her shoulder.

"\_\*\*She is your mate, yes?"\*\*\_

"\_What? No I mean-"\_

"\_\*\*Have you not sired children from her? You have reached the age have you not?"\*\*\_

"\_Well yes, but no! We don't-"\_

"Are you just going to stand there or are we going?"

Hiccup sighed and started climbing.

"\_\*\*She is bold. For a human. I like her."\*\*\_

\* \* \*

><p>They light of the sun started to climb over the edge of the sky, even if the sun itself remained firmly below it. Hiccup imagined that in most other situations he would be more at peace in this kind of situation. Astrid beside him and while he and his dragon chased the horizon. Then he sighed. This was not his dragon and they weren't exploring.<p>

Flying on Nidhogg was slightly more comfortable now. The pack Astrid brought contained fresh water, some rations and a length of rope. Hiccup looped it around the two spikes closest together, so that it formed a flimsy railing they could lean on while flying.

"\_\*\*Take it down\*\*\_\_\*\*," \*\*\_Nidhogg hated it. It complained rather silently, so only Hiccup could hear. Astrid slept almost too comfortable, her arms gripping the ropes while her back rested against the spike opposite of Hiccup's.

"\_No one can see it. You can't even see it," \_

"\_\*\*This is ridiculous. You do not even require it. If you were to fall I would catch you,\*\*"\_

"\_With what? Your teeth?"\_

"\_\*\*What else?" \*\*\_It's speech was completely serious.

"\_I don't know, maybe something that wouldn't kill us instantly? You\_\_r\_\_ teeth are as large as we are,"\_

"\_\*\*You \*\*\_\_\*\*are\*\*\_\_\*\* taking it off before we land. Child.\*\*\_\_"\_Nidhogg spoke with a finality that made Hiccup annoyed. He didn't had time to waste on untying and retying ropes. But he needed sleep and couldn't stop moving while he did. He gritted his teeth and rubbed his hands together.

Astrid stirred from her sleep. She shivered slightly and slid herself forward until she was pressed against Hiccup her cloak covering them both. "Why aren't there other dragons following us?" Her head rested on his shoulder in a strangely comfortable position.

"They would attract too much attention, only a few of Nidhogg's brothers are scouting ahead."

"You named him Nidhogg. As in the legendary dragon?"

"That'- it's difficult to explain,"

"Try me,"

"Dragons don't speak in the same way that we do, as well as words and sounds they can express feelings and memories as part of speech. The also means that dragons don't really give each other names, they're more like smells or sounds. The closest analogue to the feeling I got from him is Nidhogg,"

"So because he's a giant dragon he's named after a giant dragon,"

"Basically,"

She thought about what he said, "You called him an it. You never call dragons \_it\_,"

"That's because it is an it, it won't have children or reproduce in any fashion. Alpha's are not born like other dragons, it's why there aren't hundreds of them everywhere,"

"Isn't that sad? To never raise its own hatchlings?"

"\_\*\*That is not what is being said, Child, an Alpha's purpose is to raise other dragons. To provide and protect for those of its flight like its own hatchlings,\*\*"\_

Hiccup relayed what it said.

"But the Red Death killed the other dragons and Toothles-" she cut herself off.

"\_\*\*The Queens of Death are abominations and the Children of Night are...strange,\*\*\_"

Hiccup furrowed his eyebrows as he told Astrid.

She seemed to relax into his shoulder, "What are we going to do when we get to the Berserker island?"

Hiccup's eyes narrowed into slits and something made the hairs on the back of Astrid's head stand on end.

"You'll see."

End  
file.